101

What every screen-printer needs to know about...

adobe illustrator and spot colors

Spot Colors are a screen-printer's best friend. Understand the differences between spot color and process color and how important working with "spot colors" is when the job is not a process (cmyk) (4-color process) print job.

The Adobe Illustrator software manual may not offer specific instructions a screen-printer needs to prepare a graphics file for spot color creation, separation and output BUT the great news is the program has everything you need to get the job done easily and accurately.

If you are changing all of your colors to black, for example, just to output files or get unwanted results then you are wasting valuable time. Time is money.

Read on to learn how friendly spot colors are to a screen-printer and how to increase your job turnaround rate while reducing costly downtime...

Newsletter for Screen Printers

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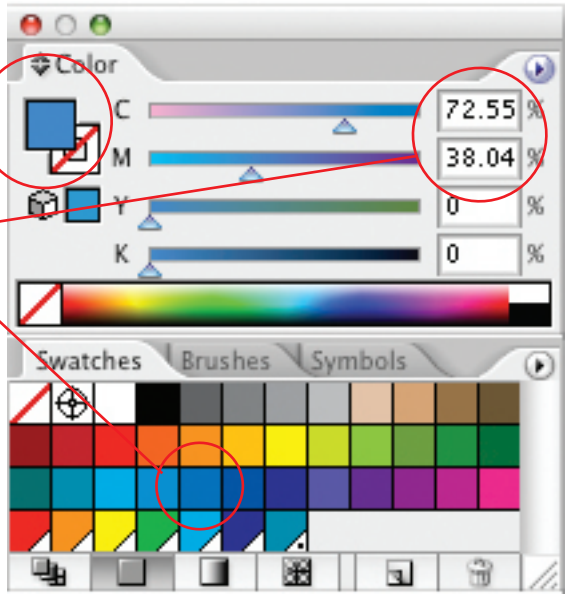
ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR®

spot colors

How do you know if this is a spot color?
And, does it matter? ABSOLUTELY!

This may look like a spot color but it is actually made up of a mixture of cyan (72.55%) and Magenta (38.04%) making it a process color (for 4-color process printing).

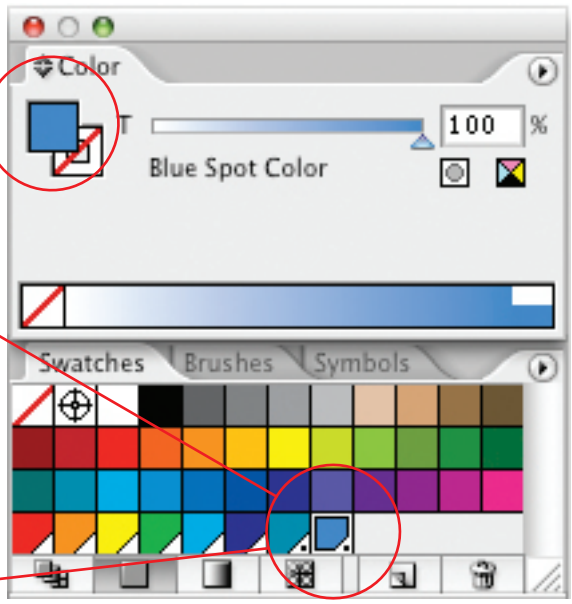
As it is now, you **can't** output this process blue color as "ONE SPOT COLOR" to a single sheet of film. Upon output – two films (cyan and magenta) will print and they will also be halftones requiring process inks and not a specific solid color.



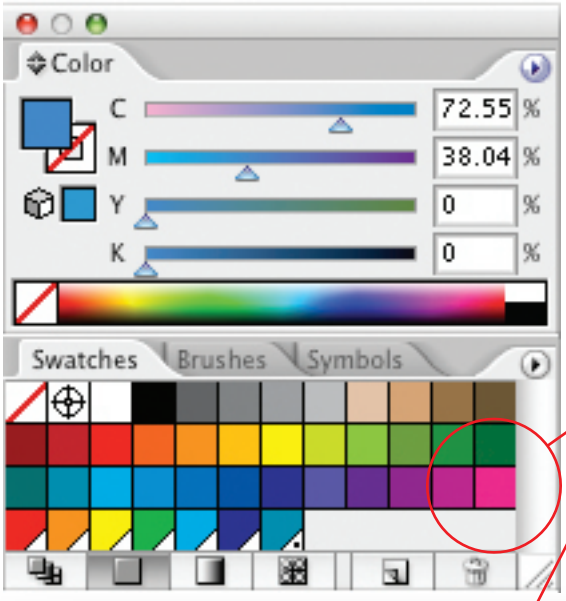
The Color Window in Adobe Illustrator showing a process color selection.

✓ This blue is a true "SPOT COLOR" which was custom named Blue Spot Color. When a color is a SPOT COLOR the swatch in the Swatches palette will have a unique appearance. Work with spot colors when you are NOT creating a "4-color process" job.

This symbol represents a spot color when working in Adobe Illustrator.
Note: CorelDraw uses a similar symbol to represent spot colors.



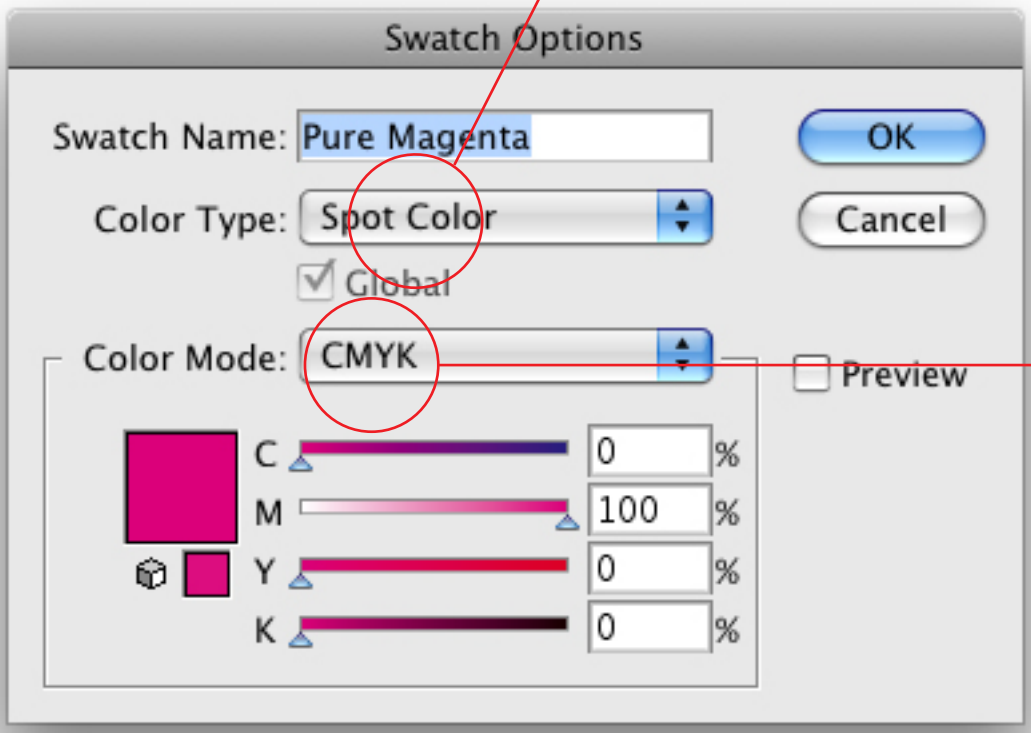
The Color Window in Adobe Illustrator showing a spot color selection.



You can easily CONVERT "process" colors to screen-print friendly "spot colors".

Double click any process color swatch in the Swatches palette. It will open the "Swatch Options" window.

Simply change the Color Type from "Process" to "Spot Color". You can rename your Swatch, too.



IMPORTANT:
the color mode (cmyk, rgb, LAB) DOES NOT MATTER – that is why spot colors are so user friendly. Once converted they are ready to use!

PLUS: You can import a swatch library of spot colors such as a "PANTONE solid coated". You will find the libraries under the WINDOW Menu of Illustrator/Swatch Libraries. Open the library and drag the swatch into your Color Window. Easy! See the Adobe User Manual or Adobe Help Menu for additional info.

IMPORTANT: When you are ready to output your separations – choose PRINT. In the print window go the the OUTPUT option. From the "Output" pop-down menu select "Separations". The default is Composite. You will see the spot colors in your file. From the Illustrator file you can custom create registration marks and color them with the swatch palette color REGISTRATION (looks like a registration mark). Elements automatically and universally on every spot color film output!